

# Germany : Some Experiences

Lutfunnessa Khan

THE fall of Berlin signalled the end of the Second World War and the fall of Berlin signalled the end of a divided existence of the German nation. Germany now reunited under the Federal flag of the German Republic is now a proud nation competing for a leading role in the world. But in its journey for the leadership of the post Cold War years, Germany is not only looking after its own, but also sharing its knowledge, skill and experience with the developing countries. The German Foundation for International Development (DSE) was established in 1959 to foster relations between the FRG and the developing countries on the basis of such mutual exchanges. The DSE does this through seminars, conferences and training programmes for developing countries in the field of social and economic development. DSE in the 32 years of its existence, in co-operation with national and international partners, has given more than 92,000 specialists and executives from 140 countries an opportunity to discuss issues of international development or to undergo advanced professional training. The DSE is based in Berlin, but also has specialised centres and branches at various locations in the Federal Republic of Germany.

This year a course was organised on "Methods and Techniques of Project Management" from 22nd May to 7th July, 1995 in Berlin by the DSE. The programme was sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on behalf of the government of the FRG. The programme was participated by professionals from countries of Asia and Africa. Bangladesh was also a participant.

The course was designed for managerial staff working in development projects in executive, supervisory and training functions. It provided strategies and tools of design for development projects, updated planning skills, enhancement of communicative and facilitative capacities and coaching on the implementation of management practices. But besides this course the participants were given an insight into the history of Germany, past and present, the land and its people and its outlook to the problems faced by the contemporary world.

Following the unconditional surrender of the German forces in the Second World War, the victorious powers — USA, Britain, Soviet Union and France — made post-war arrangements about the future of Germany which culminated in the establishment of two political entities the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The capital Berlin remained divided and in the height of Cold War the infamous Berlin wall was erected putting the seal of permanency to this division.

But the west bolstered by the massive US and western aid (1.4 billion) stood on its own and started competing with other economic powers, while the East though ensured a safe life for its population with cheap housing, healthcare and social services lagged behind. The political system and the social domination also acted in the negative. The propaganda of the

western media, particularly the television beaming to the East of a carefree, affluent new life led to an upsurge of people. The wall crumbled and the two Berlins reunited started the process of reunification of Germany. On October 3, 1990 the GDR was officially accepted to Federal Republic.

Following the restoration of national unity and the tremendous geopolitical change that have taken place in connection with the disintegration of Eastern Europe the Germany faces a completely new challenge. The overwhelming majority of Germans were strongly in favour of national reunification, but only gradually did they become aware of the degree of alienation that had developed over a period of more than 40 years when East and West Germans were practically isolated from one another. Understandably many East and West German have different opinions on the issues of life. The East Germans who hoped that standard of living would soon come at par with the West are extremely disappointed. Fifty per cent East Germans are unemployed. The secured status of women and children have also vanished with the Berlin wall. The cultural degeneration has hit lowest ebb.

The most disturbing is the outbreak of extremist right wing violence against foreigners, described in Germany as Ouslanders. In 1992 alone 17 people fell victim to this fascist attack and in 1993 a firebomb attack burned five Turkish women and children to death.

Various factors contributed to the increased violence. There is a revival of Hitlerite Nazism which relies on anti-semitism. The foreigners are the first victim of this campaign. Another obvious cause was the impression gained by some young people particularly in the East Germany and also in the West that they are being deprived of jobs and other facilities because of the presence of large number of foreigners. But to tell the truth Germany owes a great deal to her foreign workers and businessmen, 40 per cent of the workers of the Germany's world famous companies are foreigners. The Govt. though vacillated at times, under tremendous popular pressure declared their support for foreigners. The public has demonstrated its concern for the foreign members of the community in rallies and candle light vigils. But there is an undercurrent of fear of revival of Hitlerite past.

Actually the ghost of Hitler still haunts the Germans. They want to bury this dreaded past. Though there may be found some people who still adore Hitler but most of the people of Germany feel ashamed of the atrocities meted out to the helpless Jews and the liberal and democratic minded people by Hitler and his cohorts. To keep the memory of those atrocities alive concentration camps have been kept, research done and people are told what happened there.

One such camp is Buchenwald concentration camp. In July 1937 the SS started to build this camp. The first inmates had to clear the forest and erect huts and buildings. In addition to the concentration camp allowing the detention of more than 10,000 people, a modern SS base was set up for the training of SS Death Squads together with an economic enterprise owned by

the SS Gestapo. The SS used the concentration camps to hasten the expropriation of Jewish property and expulsion of Jews from Germany. Although it was no extermination camp, a large number of mass murders were committed in Buchenwald concentration camp. The number of inmates in Buchenwald reached 110,000 men and women including 86 work details thus becoming the biggest concentration camp. The camp was liberated on 11th April 1945. The no. of people (only men) killed in Buchenwald concentration camp determined according to documents of the camp secretary in April 1995 was 34,375. More than 8000 prisoners of war were shot in the stable. An estimated no. of 1100 people were executed in the crematorium and an estimated no. between 12,000 and 15,000 were dead upon arrival from other camps or fell victim to evacuation marches. This gives a total no. of approximately 56,000 prisoners killed. Besides Buchenwald there were extermination camps like Auschwitz which caused death to numerous people in the most humiliating condition. Innumerable people were made victims of unscrupulous experiments by the German scientists.

The German people do not want the past to come back. The Basic Law adopted to run the country based itself on the Rule of Law and the welfare state principle. The constitutional convention and the Parliamentary council which met in Bonn on September 1, 1948 incorporated in the Basic Law provisions requiring future governments, parties and other political groupings to protect the democratic system. The Basic Law any prohibits change in its article which ties the use of all public authority to protection of human rights and any attempt to do away with the country's democratic, social and federal system.

The Basic Law has also established equal rights for women who suffered most under Hitler. In Germany there are nearly three million more women than men. Their position with regard to marriage, divorce and family were improved. Now the question of guilt in divorce cases no longer applied. The only criteria now is whether the marriage has irreparably broken down. Divorces now share pension entitlement.

But recently what is worrying people in Germany is the waning of family. In Germany 8.4 million out of 19.5 million couples have no children in the household or are childless. The birthrate is declining. Women prefer to remain free from child bearing and family responsibilities. The Government, therefore, has taken up family promotion by providing for child raising allowances and leave. When one of the parents stays at home to raise a child the state pays DM 600 a month (for each child) for 18 months. In addition the parent is entitled to child raising leave and other facilities.

The Second World War has also left Germany with a population of younger age. Nearly one in five inhabitants of the FRG is under 18 years of age. Roughly one third of the total population is under 27. This has posed definite problem for the society. The lack of job prospects has developed extremism among the youth leading to criminal activities. Recent xenophobic violence in Germany was caused most by the young

people. But representative opinion poll, shows that the overwhelming majority of young people in Germany have no sympathy for those who attack foreigners. Nor can young offenders and their political leaders expect any lenience from the police and judicial authorities.

Though the wars were the great detractors for Germany but still old heritage is preserved with all pride and care. The broad range of museums in Germany reflects the nation's social and cultural developments. There are more than 3000 museums in the Federal Republic of Germany. Many museums were destroyed during the Second World War, but their collections were stored in safe places. There are still traces of war damages, but those were rebuilt again with great care.

The Germans are not only careful about their past, but also of future too. They want to keep their country habitable for future generation. So the protection of environment and natural resources has been taken as a big challenge facing the govt. industry and society. It is a source of much public concern and many people have through their active commitment highlighted the need for protective measure and helped considerably to improve the situation. Everybody appreciate that ecology and economy do not have to be contradictory and that environment protection is also necessary on economic ground. The consistent safeguarding the atmosphere water and soil over the time is essential for sound economic advancement. A modern environment protection industry has thus evolved. German high-tech engineering products are much in demand and now account for more than 20 per cent of world trade in this field.

The atmosphere in Germany as in other industrial countries, is heavily polluted by emissions from power stations, factories, traffic and home heating systems. A comprehensive clean air programme has been introduced. As far as traffic is concerned air pollution is being increasingly reduced through the introduction of catalytic converters to remove nitrogen oxides from exhaust fumes.

Recycling is very important to a country like Germany. In 1991 the govt introduced regulations for the avoidance of packaging waste. The ground in many parts of the country has been contaminated with heavy metals. Intensive farming too, has caused a serious deterioration of soil structure. The government is therefore drawing up comprehensive measures to conserve the soil as a stover and filter of water, but also as a biotope for plants and animals.

Initiative for nature protection measures at national level also come from co-operation among EC countries. Both federal and state governments are deeply involved in the realization of the EC's biotope network NATURA 2000.

This is what is Germany today — a Germany reunited, affluent and friendly to others. In 40 years of fruitful co-operation prior to reunification Germany earned the reputation of a reliable and helpful partner of the nations of the south where four-fifths of the world's population live. The developing nations expect united Germany to assume a larger role on the world stage.

phenomena apparent.

We must not seek the cause of our misfortune in language alone. The Hindu mind, having at its disposal the massive resources of Sanskrit, heir to the versatile tradition of its philosophy and logic, encountered western thought with confidence despite its unfamiliarity, and absorbed it without any consciousness of a permanent linguistic handicap. This source of strength is no longer available to us. While the revival of Sanskrit in the context of our national culture is not possible, to many not even desirable, we are ignorant of the intellectual riches of Arabic and Persian languages. What is worse, we failed even where it was possible to accomplish something. In other words, we have not taken the trouble to study the Bengali language deeply or carefully enough. None need be surprised that Bengali is deficient as a vehicle of conceptual thinking. In the essay referred to earlier in the paper, Buddhadeva Bose holds that "our prose shines naturally in short and simple sentences

..... long and complex ones, with involutions, parentheses and periods are comparatively hard to achieve. Not pestered with too many prepositions, and able to dispense with conjunctions, genders, plurals, articles and often with verbs themselves (sometimes the verb is just left out and sometimes it is better so), it has an eminently desirable lightness as well as (for one cannot, it seems, have something for nothing) a capacity for looseness that can at times be quite distressing." These limitations, according to him, render Bengali unsuitable as a medium of conceptual thought. Again, I differ from Buddhadeva Bose. I can easily illustrate from Bose's own writings and those of Prathama Choudhury and Anandasankar that it is possible to convey serious thought without the least loss of dignity in a light manner supported by short sentences. According to modern linguists, the grammar or structure of no language is either favourable or unfavourable to the expression of conceptual

# Loyal Opposition no More

It was rightly said about Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, 74, that he was always fond of three things: political dialogue, cobbling together political alliances to demolish governments, and 'thugqa' (hubbie-bubbie).

Branded by some as an "habitual destabilizer", the political veteran had, in times past, always been engaged in a political "struggle" whether Pakistan was under military rule or an elected civilian government. He has been in jail several times for political reasons.

The ageing Mr Khan has been godfather of almost every opposition alliance and has proved to be a master at putting together motley crowds of political forces.

Now, however, Mr Khan is no longer holding political negotiations to break any deadlock between the government and the opposition. He has become instead a "tame" politician.

His (political) "love affair" with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is in full bloom which puts him in no mood to put together another political alliance to demolish Pakistan's government. And contrary to his political track-record, he has extended all-out support to the government on every count.

May be the taste of power he savoured for the first time in his 50-year political career is too delightful. His son, Mansoor Ali Khan, has even become a member of the Punjab (biggest province of Pakistan) cabinet and it seems to be another good reason for keeping faith with Ms Bhutto.

The opposition led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif does not view veteran Khan's present role as chair of the Parliament's commit-

tee on Kashmir with respect. Mr Khan's strong association with the Benazir government irks the opposition which harshly criticized him recently "How can he effectively project the Kashmir cause, when he has opposed the establishment of Pakistan as a leader of the Ahrar Party?" Khawaja Asif, an opposition leader, says. The Nawabzada was among the Muslim leaders of then united India, who opposed the partition which led to the establishment of Pakistan.

The National Democratic Front in 1962 Mr Khan's first major opposition alliance, was formed for special elections organized by military dictator Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

When direct presidential elections were held in 1964, the shrewd Nawabzada made another alliance, the Combined Opposition Parties, and supported the losing cause of Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan. This was followed by the Pakistan Democratic Movement in 1967, and yet another, Democratic Action Committee (DAC) in 1969. In the mid-sixties, Mr Khan founded the Pakistan Democratic Party, merging four smaller parties including a faction of the Awami League (which he was heading at the time), Nizam-e-Islam Party, Justice Party and National Democratic Party.

While Mr Khan's own political party has never been a political force to be reckoned with and was routed in all general elections (he himself was elected to the National

Assembly only thrice — in 1977, 1988 and 1993) he himself has always been a force which cannot be ignored in Pakistani politics. Over the years, he has developed a kind of "love-hate" relationship with the Bhuttos and the present opposition leader Nawaz Sharif.

But he was never a great admirer of the late President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) father of the Prime Minister. Mr Khan led the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in early 1977 against ZAB, which rejected the March 1977 general elections alleging massive rigging and demanded fresh polls.

Pakistan was plunged into a crisis and Mr Bhutto, in negotiations with Mr Khan, "accepted 31 out of our 32 demands including fresh general elections and everything was settled". The Army took over, however, a few months later.

At one stage, the PNA joined the martial law cabinet and Mr Khan also nominated his representative in it "to ensure that General Zia ul Haq (the martial law administrator) does not wriggle out of his promise to hold general elections".

"When the General ignored his promise, we left the cabinet in 1979," Mr Khan says. But by that time, ZAB had been hanged on the charge of assassinating a political opponent.

Mr Khan started his "struggle" against the martial law government and in 1981 formed the Movement for Restoration of Democracy

(MRD) with Ms Bhutto's PPP and other major political forces.

The Nawabzada won a seat in the National Assembly in the 1988 party-based elections which made Ms Bhutto Prime Minister. He supported her during the first few months, but turned against her later. In 1989, he formed the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) in which Mr Sharif's PML was the major party.

COP started to "struggle" against the government, causing its downfall in 1990, and the holding of fresh elections in the same year. Mr Khan lost and after a few months joined hands again with the PPP to fight the Sharif government which won in the 1990 elections. Mr Khan contributed a lot to its ultimate fall.

He won his seat with PPP support in the 1993 general elections. Ms Bhutto's decision to accord him "due respect" and to keep him in good humour are basically meant to keep him busy to cause "mischief".

With Mr Khan on the side of government, living in the comfortable Ministers' Colony of Islamabad and enjoying the perks and privileges more than those enjoyed by a federal minister, the opposition, despite concerted efforts, has not succeeded in cobbling together an alliance against the government.

But there is no doubt that the moment Mr Khan's "honeymoon" with the Benazir government ends, he will be received by the opposition with open arms because it badly needs him to put together a grand political alliance against the present administration.

— Depthnews Asia

# Australians Help Asian Archivists in the Battle to Preserve Their Past

Archivists across Asia face funding restrictions for building the facilities needed to preserve their decomposing heritage. Reports William R. Gasson.

AUSTRALIAN archivists have pioneered techniques that could minimize damage to films and now, they are keen to pass on this knowledge to help preserve Asia's decomposing collections.

Training Asian technicians and officials on preserving, storing and cataloguing their films and photographs is part of an ongoing Australian programme.

A recent trip by Australian archive deputy director Ray Edmondson to Manila has forged another link between Australian and Asian film archivists. Mr Edmondson prepared a strategic plan to help Filipinos preserve their film collection.

"All pre-1950 (Philippine) film was lost because the climate just ripped into it," said Mr Edmondson.

Archivists across Asia face funding restrictions for building the facilities needed to preserve their decomposing heritage.

In the Philippines, where they make 150 feature films a year, the cost of cataloguing then storing the film in the correct conditions is enormous.

"But they're keen people and they'll do it eventually," said Mr Edmondson. "It's

marvelous to watch." Archive director Ron Brent gave the Hong Kong government technical advice on establishing a proposed archive last year. He found archives stored in people's garages.

Richie Lam, acquisitions manager for the Hong Kong Film Archive, received a briefing from an Australian staff when he visited Canberra. The Hong Kong archive is expected to be fully operational by 1997.

Indonesia has films that date back 20 to 30 years and that need preserving.

"You do become emotional when you see all these films and the concern people show about preserving them," said Mr Edmondson. "Your heart goes out to them. We're just glad we can be a part of preserving them."

In Cambodia, where successive generations grew up amidst warfare, the fighting destroyed many historical landmarks. Old fading photographic plates and black and white photographs are all the visual records left.

"Cambodians working with me would look at something significant like a statue or monument and ask me: 'What's that?'" recalled Mark Nizette, senior manager of

preservation and a member of Australia's National Film and Sound Archives.

A photograph of a bamboo funeral pyre for a Cambodian King dating back to 1923 amazed one of Nizette's

helpers who asked: "Did they do that?"

"Yes. And right outside the door where those kids are playing soccer on the grass," Mr Nizette replied.

— Depthnews Asia

# Suku Park

Continued from page 9  
timate feeling. The colour and the symbols he uses are derived from oriental and folk paintings which are two-dimensional. His works are impossible to be reproduced by machinery; they are all handmade. His works contain both the traditional spirit of Korean ceramic which he was born into and had grown up with, as well as the spirit he experienced in Scandinavia. His works also display his introspective nature and sense of humour. At present he is sort of a cultural ambassador of Korea in the West.

In his short visit to Bangladesh Suku Park spent some very hectic days in Dhaka and Chittagong. Apart from his official business in Bangladesh and study of the native clay here, he did a ceramic production display and slide show in the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. The indigenous ceramic and clay products attracted him much and drew much admiration from him. In Chittagong Park visited the Korean export processing zone as an adviser to the

business firm Youngone who were examining possibilities of ceramic and brick products with local material. He also met reputed Bangladeshi sculptor Alok Ray in Chittagong who has been assigned to do a terra-cotta mural for Youngone. Park visited the Department of Fine Arts in the University of Chittagong and the sea-shore. Park was all praise for Chittagong; he particularly liked its hilly terrain and areas filled with trees. Chittagong was like the Seoul of his childhood which was full of greens, whereas Dhaka looked like the present Seoul, full of traffic jam and pollution. Suku Park was very keen to know more about Bangladesh and its traditional and contemporary art which he could see very little due to his very busy schedule and short visit. He is very keen to visit this country again whenever opportunity comes. A future visit of an internationally reputed ceramic artist of his stature which would hopefully enable our artists of the filed to learn from his experiences would be, no doubt, of great benefit.

# Bengali as a Vehicle . . .

Continued from page 9  
where shine. In this connection, I must mention Syed Ali Ashraf's *Kavya Parichaya* (On Aesthetics) and Abdul Hai's *Sanskrit O Sanskriti* (Literature and Culture). Whatever one might think of them as research documents, their style has a grace and lucidity appropriate to the subject. It is in this sense that Abdul Wadud's *Muslim Manisha* (Muslim Genius) too deserves praise. Many useful facts have been presented by the author in a not unpleasant style, but nowhere does his thought attain the level of abstraction which could be said to test conclusively the limits of the expressiveness of the language he uses. I should like to emphasise this. It is possible to illustrate my point from other works equally valuable, but there is really no need for it. The truth is that we have not done with any absorption, any serious philosophical or conceptual thinking whose subtlety, complexity, depth, or imaginative sweep is beyond the expressive capacity of our language.

The fault lies deep. Our thought is relatively shallow. It does not have its roots in the total being of the writer, and for this reason radiates no life-giving energy to the mind of the community. The claim that we have experienced a deep awakening in our minds owing to the catylysmic realisation of an ideal demanding urgent expression cannot, I fear, be taken seriously. Even where there are signs of such an awakening, it has not found utterance in adequate terms because of the refusal to take pains. Our vanity, the home-spun notions of our provincial minds, our faith in convenient digests of western thought are among our banes. Our debt to sources other than indigenous is well known, and yet we have not assimilated a fraction of it. A comparison of this creative poverty of a politically free people with the many-pointed richness of the Renaissance experienced by a politically enslaved Bengal in the nineteenth century would make the cause of the discrepancy between the two

phenomena apparent. We must not seek the cause of our misfortune in language alone. The Hindu mind, having at its disposal the massive resources of Sanskrit, heir to the versatile tradition of its philosophy and logic, encountered western thought with confidence despite its unfamiliarity, and absorbed it without any consciousness of a permanent linguistic handicap. This source of strength is no longer available to us. While the revival of Sanskrit in the context of our national culture is not possible, to many not even desirable, we are ignorant of the intellectual riches of Arabic and Persian languages. What is worse, we failed even where it was possible to accomplish something. In other words, we have not taken the trouble to study the Bengali language deeply or carefully enough. None need be surprised that Bengali is deficient as a vehicle of conceptual thinking. In the essay referred to earlier in the paper, Buddhadeva Bose holds that "our prose shines naturally in short and simple sentences

..... long and complex ones, with involutions, parentheses and periods are comparatively hard to achieve. Not pestered with too many prepositions, and able to dispense with conjunctions, genders, plurals, articles and often with verbs themselves (sometimes the verb is just left out and sometimes it is better so), it has an eminently desirable lightness as well as (for one cannot, it seems, have something for nothing) a capacity for looseness that can at times be quite distressing." These limitations, according to him, render Bengali unsuitable as a medium of conceptual thought. Again, I differ from Buddhadeva Bose. I can easily illustrate from Bose's own writings and those of Prathama Choudhury and Anandasankar that it is possible to convey serious thought without the least loss of dignity in a light manner supported by short sentences. According to modern linguists, the grammar or structure of no language is either favourable or unfavourable to the expression of conceptual

thought. Compared with the complex grammar, now committed to writing, of the language of some American Indians, the grammar of Arabic and Persian would seem child's play. The subtlest and the most ancient philosophical thinking in the world was done in classical Chinese which is virtually a language without grammar. Verbs in the speech of the Hopi Indians do not divide time into past, present and future. While describing action, they convey the sense of time's continuity as well as its relativity. Had Einstein been born into this community he would have arrived at his theory of Relativity far sooner and expounded it better. In the light of modern linguistics, it is unscientific to seek to determine the range of expressiveness of a language on the basis of its formal features.

I do not see why any one should grieve because an English phrase cannot be exactly translated into Bengali. Who would deny that rendering a Bengali phrase in other languages is at times impos-

sible or equally difficult? To say that the Bengali word *niti* is faulty because it has more than one meaning is naive. No word, much less an abstract word, has in any language but one meaning. The word 'principle' in English means a variety of things in different contexts: 'he held water to be the first principle of all things'; 'moral principles'; 'he has ability but no principle'; 'in all these instruments the principle is the same' etc. There are other meanings of the word which it is not necessary to illustrate.

This article, originally written in English by Munier Choudhury, reprinted here with the permission of Mr Mohiuddin of the University Press Limited. The "Bengali as a vehicle" ... is being included in the 1st part of the forthcoming book from UPL *Contemporary Bengali Writing* edited by Khan Sarwar Murshid.

# My Son Munier

Continued from page 9

loved to eat beef and *roti* and would always ask if there was some for him. Sometimes he would wait while I made *roti* for him. He would pull up a chair and sit beside his father lying on the bed and eat his beef and *roti*. His father would look up to see what Munier was eating. Munier would say, abba, I am eating beef and *roti*. His father who had lost his speech would just nod his head happily.

In 1971 when he was staying with me, he would buy a lot of grocery on his way back from the University. I would say, why do you shop so much during these bad times? We

can do with *dal-bhat* and *aloo bharta*. He would say, amma, I buy what I can, I don't haggle in the market. You can't go to the market every day. And he would take some fish and whatever else he had bought for his mother-in-law who lived nearby.

I am dark. My Munier was also dark. Manik is fair like his father. His father would say to him, you are your mother's son and Manik is mine. A lot of people say that I look like Munier, that my voice also sounds like him. My son is like me, but he has gone away without me.

Translated from the Bengali by Rahela Banu